



Editor's Foreword – *Andy Clark*

We have another really varied installment of the newsletter for you with plenty of contributions from across the branch. We're into double figures for the number of contributors, which is (probably) a record and I'd hope a clear sign that we're keeping some decent momentum with this publication, with almost no nagging required on my part.

I won't duplicate what Mike has to say later, but just to offer my own thanks to outgoing Branch Secretary Barbara Pettit for her sterling service to the branch over the last 30 years, which has included helping logic check & proof-read this newsletter since it restarted in 2022. Barbara has demonstrated a great eye for detail so will be sorely missed. A welcome of course to Richard While, acting Secretary, who is picking up the reins and will have to get used to my nagging about newsletter deadlines!

Just the two Cheltenham Branch-specific events to keep on your radar for now, in the table below, but I've also added the upcoming G&B Training Day on 10th October, although there aren't any details on this yet beyond a 'save the date'. A reminder that there are plenty of other training events happening throughout the year, so please keep checking the branch website for details.

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Saturday 3 rd October	Priors Norton	16:00	Cheltenham Branch Striking Competition
Saturday 10 th October	Various - TBC	TBC	Updates being provided on G&B website
Saturday 21 st November	Dumbleton	15:00	Branch AGM comprising ringing, a short service, then a ringers' tea and AGM

That's it from me – happy reading and see you for the next one, due for publication in early October.

Branch Chairman's Welcome – *Mike Hartley*

Greetings everyone,

I hope you had a nice Spring and have experienced some enjoyable and rewarding ringing since the previous newsletter. I also hope that you are coping with the current heat wave.

Cheltenham Branch Secretary

Again it's been a busy three months in Cheltenham Branch. Most significantly, April saw Barbara Pettit's retirement from the Branch Secretary role. Barbara has served as a Branch Officer for nearly thirty years, twelve of which were as branch Treasurer and seventeen and a half as branch Secretary. I'm sure members will echo my profuse thanks to Barbara for her outstanding commitment and contribution to making Cheltenham Branch a healthy bellringing community. I'm pleased to welcome Richard While as the new acting Branch Secretary, pending formal nominations and elections at our AGM in November.



Recent Events

Our branch Training Officer, Cara, has continued with her energetic organisation and running of training sessions. Most of these are by invitation for training in specific areas. Pleasingly, there were excellent attendances for the open-to-all Surprise Major (Core 7 methods) practice at Cheltenham Minster and the branch's second Pot-Luck striking competition at Winchcombe (for which Andy has written an article later in the newsletter). In connection with training, I'm extremely grateful to the nine ringers who volunteer to visit branch tower practices in pairs to provide support and capture training and other needs. A total of 22 visits are planned for 2026, mostly to towers outside Cheltenham, with each volunteer making four or five visits during the year. It would be great if the number of visits could be increased in 2027. Additional volunteers are always welcome! Personally, I find these visits very rewarding, and I'm sure that they are useful to the towers, even if they're not as frequent as they might wish.

Two fascinating talks have been given recently to branch members, by Jeremy Alford on the Hawkear 'strikometer', and by Mark Davies on the history and ringing of Stedman (see later article). My thanks to them both.

The first six months of the year are an intensive period for those involved in striking competitions. Following hard on the heels of the National 12-bell qualifiers (see previous newsletter), Cheltenham Branch has participated in the Tewkesbury Shield (10-bell), Penn (8-bell) and Croome (6-bell) competitions, respectively coming 4th, 1st and 5th. Many congratulations to all who took part. Quentin Jackson has written an article later in this newsletter on the Branch's success in the Penn Trophy.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming months there is much to look forward to. Included in Cara's schedule of training events, two 'training the trainers' sessions are planned for early September. This is a key part of our Branch's approach to the Central Council's 'Ringing 2030' initiative, which recognises the local shortage of ringers fully equipped to teach basic bell handing. This represents a start to remedy the gap.

Also related to 'Ringing 2030', Lucy Hennessy is arranging a second Youth Ringing Social event for Saturday 1st August (see the 'Branch Notices' section of this newsletter for more details).

Last but not least, this year's branch striking competition for the Banner and Cleeve Trophies will be held at Prior's Norton on Saturday 3rd October, starting at 4pm. The event will include tea & coffee and 'bring and share' cakes, so please do come along whether or not you're ringing in a team. Please note that the [competition rules](#) have been updated to provide greater clarity and take account of the demise of the G&B Association Proficiency Certificates.

Have a good summer.

Best wishes,

Mike



Cheltenham Branch Wins the Penn Trophy – *Quentin Jackson*

On Saturday 18th April, the G&B Association held its AGM, including two striking competitions running concurrently – the Croome Trophy (6-bell) and the Penn Trophy (8-bell). The latter is a competition where the ringers in each band are not from a single tower, and this year's competition was held at Ashchurch.

The test piece for the Penn Trophy this year was 224 changes of any major method of your choice. This is two courses of a plain method or a plain course of a treble bob or surprise method. Most teams entering choose Plain Bob Major, while the Cheltenham Branch chose a plain course of Yorkshire Surprise Major. There are a number of advantages of Yorkshire:

- There are no calls – it is amazing how a bob can suddenly cause panic and a mistake!
- The plain course is hugely familiar and often rung on practice nights and for service.
- Yorkshire has more coursing than other methods like Cambridge or Kent where the striking can be more difficult.

The bells at Ashchurch are very good for a striking competition. The bells are clear in the tower and the recent rehang and retune of the bells has made them easier to ring.

The Cheltenham band was organised by Mike Hartley. It comprised ringers from Charlton Kings, Leckhampton and the Minster. Most of the ringers ring regularly together at various other practices.

As a band we like to ring fairly fast. Sometimes the temptation with striking competitions is to ring slower, but if you ring at a speed you don't normally ring at this can cause more errors. The main aim is that all ringers should ring at the one speed, noting that if a ringer is regularly slow or fast you can accumulate a number of faults very quickly.

Cheltenham were one of the last bands to ring. We heard some of the bands just before us such as Bristol and Tewkesbury, who put in very good performances, with Tewkesbury having won the competition in 2025 (and given the home territory, were perhaps the unofficial competition favourites?). We were confident when we rang, but we did wonder if a couple of mistakes – although very quickly corrected – could mark us down.

The judge for the competition was Matthew Tosh, assisted by Annie Hall. Before announcing the results, the judges gave some feedback and comments for each band. The judges' comments for several teams were around an inconsistent pace, especially at lead. The peal speeds varied from 2 hours 38 mins (for the Cheltenham team – the fastest on the day) up to 3 hours.

Matthew's comments for Cheltenham were "a fast pace but consistent ringing with a few minor trips and lovely little bell runs". Cheltenham was awarded first place with an accuracy score of 93%, with Tewkesbury coming second (89%) and Bristol coming third (88%). The band comprised, in order of bell rung: Cath Jack, Hilda Ridley, Cara Capewell, Richard Knight, Stuart Tomlinson, Mike Hartley, Quentin Jackson and Mark Davies. We were really pleased to have won the competition, which was last won by the Cheltenham Branch in 2006, and prior to that, in 1996, with Hilda, Stuart and Mark ringing in all three of these.



The Highs and Lows of being a Branch Secretary – *Barbara Pettit*

The best part of being Branch Secretary has been getting to know all you wonderful ringers, be it learners or very experienced ringers and everything in between.

Communication now is so much easier – do you remember the days when information was posted to tower captains who would then pass it on to their members? Covid was a challenging time – how to get Annual Reports to towers – collect from Cirencester, meet Tewkesbury Secretary in Waitrose car park to pass on her reports, and an afternoon tour of tower contacts was the solution – like a ringing tour without the ringing.

Committee meetings and AGMs are not so bad – good preparation and quick publication of Minutes helps these run smoothly. Branch Officers from the Association meet up once a year to air common issues. When I took over the Treasurer role in 1997 I hadn't been ringing long, so attending branch practices (as the officers are encouraged to do) was really helpful in meeting other ringers and expanding my ringing. Introducing a separate Tower Report for the AGM made a little extra work but has proved beneficial in recording annual progress rather than relying on a tower member to attend the AGM to say a few words – a lot of towers were not represented.

A low is in December when we have to get everything ready for the G&B Annual Report. Check with every tower to make sure that their details have not changed, update if necessary and then do lots of cross checking using the Report Secretary's listing! Hopefully with MemberMojo this will be far easier in the future.

A particular gripe is when people reply to an email in spite of being asked to reply to someone else whose address is included!

Overall a satisfying job and rewarding to be able to give something back to an organisation where all the tuition and advice is free and so generously given. Thank you all for your support.

& May Day at Badgeworth

As it fell on our Friday practice night, May Day Doubles was the method of the night. It's Plain Bob Doubles with Pink Singles (called as a Bob) so was achievable by our learners as well as the more experienced. The learners took it in turns to ring the third and by calling a Bob at the first lead (when the third makes 2nds) they could ring May Day unaffected by the calls. Having achieved this they then rang it again affected, having had a quick lesson on the Pink Single. Well done all!



The Pot-Luck Striking Competition Returns – *Andy Clark*

From the Penn Trophy to something quite different...

Saturday 9th May saw the return of the Branch's Pot-Luck Striking Competition in Winchcombe.

To recap, this event was first tried out in the branch in 2025, following a suggestion made by Pat Halls at the 2023 Branch AGM. It's a simple concept really, but a very effective one. Everyone arrives, does their ringing and then listens to the results – much like a traditional striking competition. But there are two notable differences. Rather than arriving in pre-arranged bands, a number of team captains (those with a little more experience) are selected and they then draw ringers at random (hence 'Pot-Luck'). So you won't know which team you're in until the day, or indeed a matter of minutes before you start your ringing. Secondly, and perhaps crucially, everyone judges everyone, with the scores then being averaged to arrive at a final ranking. But the ranking isn't taken too seriously, with the real emphasis being on participation.

The 2026 event again enjoyed a really strong turnout, with well over 20 ringers, enough for us to form into five teams. This year, all teams chose to ring Call Changes. Three teams rang, before we had a half-time break for tea and cake – all very civilised and perhaps another differentiator from a traditional striking competition!

Well done to the winning band – 'Becca's Bongers' – captained by Becca Meyer. The continued success of this event means that we hope it can become an annual fixture. Many thanks to Cara for her hard work in organising the event, and of course for the Winchcombe band for again hosting the competition.



The Winning Band!

Left-Right: Simon Capewell, Anya Tillman, Sue Clegg, Becca Meyer, Peter Davies, Clara Jackson



Alderton and Dumbleton Ringing Outing – *Grahame Tucker*

On Thursday 14th May, the ringers from these two towers enjoyed a day out ringing at Swinford, St Mary's (a peal of six bells) and Hook Norton, Saint Peter's (a peal of eight bells), in the beautiful rural area of North Oxfordshire.

The bells at Saint Mary's were quite light but easily manageable to allow for some plain courses of Grandsire Doubles, plain hunting and a range of call changes. All in all, a pleasant hour's ringing. A short drive to Hook Norton, through the leafy lanes, brought us to Saint Peter's.

The bells here were reached by a steep spiral staircase, giving access to the large ringing room, which certainly emphasised the scale of the tower, with so much space between the ropes. Saint Peter's is a grand parish church without doubt, a product of the bygone age of the wool trade so typical of the Cotswolds. The first six were rung up in peal. The seventh and eighth were then raised individually, considering their weight. However, the sound of this peal of eight, when ringing rounds and call changes, was one to cherish and we were further complimented by those who were listening outside. Our ringing was now complete and we lunched at the Hook Norton Brewery.

Following this we were entertained by our guide, who led an excellent tour of this world-famous Victorian brewery. Of course, no visit to a brewery would be the same without having the opportunity to sample some of their fine ales. A perfect end to a memorable day.

Bell Sunday at St Peters Leckhampton – *Paula Ware*

Bell Sunday, on 17th May, gave an opportunity for the congregation to learn more about the bells and 'have a go' at ringing after a special morning service at St Peters, Leckhampton.

Led by Rev. Gary Grady, the service had a bell ringing theme throughout. From Harry Tomlinson chiming a bell before and after the themed sermon, to members of the band, Barbara Pettit and Bob Peters, reading lessons and prayers. During communion there was an unexpected treat with members of the choir ringing an arrangement of Westminster Chimes by Dr. Kit Perona-Wright on hand bells. The Anthem was Christ's Bell by Hollins, and the final hymn 'Glad bells ring loud'.

The regular Sunday morning ringing by Leckhampton Bellringers was extended so more people could enjoy it. A highlight was two live streams of the actual bells ringing in the Tower, which thanks to Barbara Pettit and Keith Reading installing it, fascinated everyone. Thanks to Keith Reading for providing the photo.





Following the service, Chris Hickey presented a short history of the St Peter's bells and explained how the Bellringers – aged from 11 to over 80 – are part of the church community, ringing at weddings and National occasions as well as before the morning service.

After a health and safety warning, the congregation was invited to come and have a go. A fun session led by Cara Capewell supported by other members of the band attracted both young and old, eager to learn more about bell ringing. A team effort, enjoyed by all – that may become an annual event.

Stedman Seminar – *Mark Davies*

In May I ran a Stedman seminar in the tower at Cheltenham Minster. It was well-attended, with a varied collection of ringers, all at different points along their Stedman careers, so I tried my best to offer something for everyone.

We started with the question, “Why Stedman?”. It is indeed a strange method for most of us to be ringing in 2026 – very different to anything else we generally practice. To try to answer the question, I delved into the “deep time” of our ringing heritage, way back to the change-ringing dream-time of the early 17th Century, or possibly even late 16th, when the basis of it all, the legendary “Sixes”, were conceived.

From there we learnt about the great Fabian himself, a man who, from a rural background in Herefordshire, went to London in a time of national turmoil, became its leading ringer, mastered the mathematics of group theory a century before mathematicians even thought of it, used that to create the most innovative method of its time, and had the ability to publicise it via the mass media of the day – the printing press. I had with me a reproduction of his seminal work, *Campanologia*, published in 1677, in which the figures of Stedman's Principle first saw the light of day (turn to page 129!).

Part of the mystique of Stedman arises from the arcane mysteries of composition in the method, and in particular the three-century long struggle to compose peals of Stedman Triples. We encountered the great names – Noonan, Hudson, Thurstans and Wyld – that echo down the ages, their centuries of intense intellectual effort culminating at last in the famous “bobs-only” compositions of the late 1990s. Only one present other than me had rung such a peal!

But above all, I wanted to show how Stedman is the most democratic of all methods. This is not just because it is a principle – with no hunting treble, all ringers ring the method – but also because it is the one method that has been rung through all our history and across all strata of our ringing society. Go to any village six with a reasonable band, and they will be ringing, or aspiring to ring, Stedman Doubles. Sit outside St Paul's Cathedral whilst a peal is rung for some national occasion, and you will hear Stedman Cinques. There is nothing else like this.

We moved from history and philosophy to theory and practice, with tips on ringing the method (quick and slow – which am I!), and an explanation of the calling positions for Stedman Triples. Lots of excellent questions from the audience followed (“How do I keep track of coursing orders in a quarter-peal?”). Finally, a number of ringers got the chance to try calling a simple touch – SLQ – with some success!

Overall a very enjoyable evening, which I hope was useful for everyone present. If you're interested, you can read the full detail of the seminar on the Branch Website at this [link](#).



Open Gardens Event – *Edward Kain*

St Peter's Church, Winchcombe took the opportunity of an Open Gardens event on Sunday 21st June to have a Tower Open day and to try some recruitment.

It turned out to be sweltering hot, sunny afternoon. We were competing with the Wimbledon Mens' Final and the World Cup football!

Despite that, between noon and 4pm, we succeeded in attracting 32 people up the tower, to learn about bellringing and to have "a go".

Two people expressed an interest in having lessons, several more "might take it up later", and a whole lot of good publicity was achieved.

This was a Cheltenham Branch initiative, with seven ringers from the Branch taking it in turns at different times throughout the afternoon, to "man" the gate.

We used the Branch banners outside the church front porch to attract visitors in, and this along with ringing a bell now and then proved a very successful way of capturing the interest of passers-by. See pictures below.

If anyone else is thinking of organising a similar recruitment event, I can strongly recommend these banners, which can be borrowed from the Cheltenham Branch (please speak to Cara in the first instance).





A Selection of Notable Performances – *Andy Clark*

Please note the title of this article – a selection! So I don't claim this is exhaustive, but here's a good selection of performances over the second quarter of the year that I either spotted or were flagged to me!

First, congratulations to Branch Chairman Mike Hartley on his significant birthday (I won't ask him to put a number on it) and also to Jon Williams who recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

Well done also to outgoing branch Secretary Barbara Pettit on ringing her 1,000th quarter peal on the bells at St Peter's, Leckhampton.

And last but by no means least, huge congratulations to Lawrence Jackson, aged 11, on ringing his first quarter peal – ringing the treble to Plain Bob Doubles at his home tower – St Peter's, Leckhampton, conducted by his father Quentin and with his mother Clara also in the band.

For future editions of the newsletter, please continue to flag any notable performances so I can include them. I tend to dip in and out of Bellboard rather than monitor it forensically, so if in doubt, please flag it!

Prior's Norton, Gloucestershire St Mary Tuesday, 7 April 2026 in 47m (10–3–18 in F#) 1344 Ashted Surprise Major 1 Greg Jones 2 Mike Seagrave 3 Sandra Alford 4 Jeremy D Alford 5 Rachel Coates 6 David P Bagley 7 Michael Hartley (C) 8 Mark B Davies A significant birthday present for the conductor	Alderton, Gloucestershire St Margaret Friday, 17 April 2026 in 42m (9½ in A) 1260 Plain Bob Minor 1 Isabel Hitchings 2 Barbara Pettit 3 Reg Hitchings 4 Paul Smith 5 Stuart Tomlinson 6 Michael Hartley (C) Rung to celebrate the 80th birthday of John Williams (17/04/46). John learnt to ring in 1996 and has been tower correspondent for Alderton and Dumbleton for more than 25 years
Leckhampton, Gloucestershire St Peter Sunday, 24 May 2026 (9–1–14 in Ab) 1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor 1 Isabel Hitchings 2 Reg Hitchings (C) 3 Barbara Pettit 4 Andrew Haynes 5 Mike Seagrave 6 Michael Hartley Barbara's 1,000 Quarter Peal on the bells 600th together: 1, 2 and 6	Leckhampton, Gloucestershire St Peter Wednesday, 1 July 2026 (9–1–14 in Ab) 1260 Plain Bob Doubles 1 Lawrence Jackson 2 Rebecca L Meyer 3 Clara Jackson 4 Stuart Tomlinson 5 Quentin Jackson (C) 6 Barbara Pettit 1st Quarter - 1 (aged 11)



Branch Notices

A Reminder of the Belfry Repair Fund – *Andrew Haynes*

At the Management Committee meeting in March, it was noted that there were very few applications for grants. This means that there is a reasonable amount of money available in the Belfry Repair Fund for grants for repairs and renovations. This fund exists to provide grants towards repairs, renovations (excluding ropes) or augmentations of existing rings of bells, installation of new rings and similar purposes, and also to make payments and grants towards marketing, recruitment, training and development.

Please get in contact with the branch committee or check the Bell Restoration Fund's [webpage](#) if you believe your tower has a project that could benefit from a grant.

Choral Evensong at Gloucester Cathedral

Maureen MacBane, ringer at Warden Hill, flagged to me that she at Gloucester cathedral on Tuesday 16th June for Choral Evensong 'with admission to the Company of St Kyneburga ' and was pleased to note that Sheila Berryman (of St Mary the Virgin, Lydney) was honoured for her dedication to bell ringing. Well done to Sheila on this achievement.

Young Ringers' Outing – *Lucy Hennesey*

On Saturday 1st August there will be an outing targeted at connecting young people held in the Cheltenham area. The event is roughly targeted at ringers under 30s (no lower age limit), with all abilities and associations welcome. If this or future events is something you'd be interested in, please get in touch at: teamlead@cheltenhambranch.co.uk

Schedule:

- 10:30-11:30: St Mark's Church
- 11:30-13:30: Lunch
- 13:30-14:30: St Mary's Church, Charlton Kings

We look forward to seeing you.